

# **A SUMMARY OF VIRGINIA HUNTERS' OPINIONS ON SUNDAY HUNTING**

**Submitted January 4, 2007**

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## Summary

In August the wildlife division staff was asked by the Board of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to examine the issue of Sunday hunting in the Commonwealth since the most current information on hunter's opinions on the issue dated back to the department's 1996-1997 annual hunter survey. The staff began the process of developing a questionnaire and obtaining a sample of Virginia hunters to survey. On November 22, 2006 the first mailing of the survey was sent to a random sample of 5,000 licensed hunters throughout Virginia. A second, follow-up mailing was sent to non-respondents on December 8, 2006. A response rate of 59% was obtained from these two mailings. This sample size of 5,000 hunters reflects over ten times the number of completed surveys required to ensure that survey results would be generalizable to the total population of Virginia licensed hunters within a five percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level.

The survey consisted of fourteen questions. First, individual hunters were asked about their support or opposition to Sunday hunting. Other questions asked hunters how they felt about potential restrictions or limits placed upon Sunday hunting, the distance they traveled to hunt, the number of days they hunted, and types of land they hunted on. Hunters were asked their opinions about how Sunday hunting could potentially impact relationships with landowners, time and opportunity to hunt, and the number of animals harvested. Finally, a series of demographic questions were included to obtain information about the hunters' age, gender, and place of residence.

The 2006 survey results indicate that 53% of all responding hunters said they **Strongly Supported** Sunday Hunting in Virginia, compared to 28.5% who said they were **Strongly Opposed**. This question was measured on a seven point scale (1=Strongly Oppose, 4=Neither oppose nor support, 7=Strongly Support). When the categories were combined, 62% of responding hunters indicated some level of support for Sunday hunting compared to 34% who were opposed.

In the 1996 -1997 Virginia hunter survey, a similar question asked hunters whether they favored or opposed Sunday hunting. The results of this survey indicated 39% said they **Strongly Favored** Sunday hunting whereas 45% **Strongly Opposed** it. The 1996-1997 hunter survey question also used a 7-point scale (1=Strongly Oppose, 4=Does not matter, 7=Strongly Favor). When categories were combined, 45% of hunters favored Sunday hunting and 48% opposed it. The results from these two surveys indicate there is a significant difference in hunters' opinions about Sunday hunting since 1996.

Regionally, there were minor differences in hunter's support for Sunday hunting. Overall support ranged from 66% in northern Virginia (Region 5) to 58% in the south central Piedmont (Region 2) area of the state.

Hunters were asked their level of support or opposition to certain restrictions or limitations to Sunday hunting. Hunters indicated their opposition to most of the restrictions. In fact, allowing Sunday hunting "with no limitations, just like any other hunting day" was supported by 56% of hunters and no one category of restrictions or limitations were supported by the majority of hunters.

Hunters were also asked if they supported or opposed Sunday hunting for certain species. Generally, the majority of hunters supported the hunting of all species on Sundays, with two exceptions. First, 59% of hunters expressed opposition to deer hunting with dogs on Sunday whereas 37% of hunters opposed deer hunting without dogs on Sunday. Additionally, 55.5% of hunters said they opposed bear hunting with dogs while only 40% said they opposed bear hunting without dogs on Sunday.

Over three-quarters (77.5%) of responding hunters believed that Sunday hunting would increase the amount of time to hunt and 63% said it would increase "opportunities for hunters to try new places to hunt in Virginia." Sixty-two percent of hunters thought Sunday hunting would increase youth participation in hunting. Additional statistical analyses revealed a significant relationship between certain questions. A relationship was found between a hunter's place of residence and support of Sunday hunting. Fifty-five percent of hunters who reside on farms supported Sunday hunting compared to 70% who reside in the suburbs and 77% residing in urban areas. A relationship between the age of hunters and support of Sunday hunting was also found. Specifically, 76% of hunters under the age of 30 supported Sunday hunting while only 41% over the age of 60 were supporters of Sunday hunting.

The average age of hunters responding to this survey was 45.2 years and they ranged in age from 14 to 83 years of age. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were male and 3% were female. Twenty-three percent of the respondents said they lived on farms, 43% lived in rural areas, 13% lived in towns with a population less than 50,000, 12% lived in the suburbs, and 9% lived in urban areas.



# Virginia Sunday Hunting Questionnaire

|  | Strongly Oppose |     | Neither Oppose nor Support                               |      |     | Strongly Support |                  |
|--|-----------------|-----|--|------|-----|------------------|------------------|
| <b>1. Please indicate your level of support or opposition to Sunday hunting in Virginia.</b> | 28.5            | 3.5 | 2.3  | 3.8  | 3.6 | 5.2              | 53.1             |
| <b>2. Please indicate your level of support or opposition to allow Sunday hunting...</b>     |                 |     |  |      |     |                  |                  |
| a. Only on private lands   | 38.7            | 4.6 | 2.1  | 9.9  | 3.9 | 4.8              | 36.0             |
| b. Only on public lands  | 45.2            | 5.4 | 3.1  | 13.6 | 3.9 | 4.2              | 24.7             |
| c. For bowhunting only   | 52.9            | 7.2 | 3.4  | 15.5 | 4.9 | 2.7              | 13.5             |
| d. Only on certain Sundays (e.g., opening firearm weekend, muzzleloader, etc.)               | 55.5            | 8.2 | 4.2  | 14.9 | 4.6 | 3.5              | 9.1              |
| e. If safety zones are created around churches   | 38.7            | 4.5 | 2.0  | 16.7 | 4.9 | 5.6              | 27.6             |
| f. After a certain time (for example, 1pm)   | 56.4            | 7.4 | 3.9  | 14.1 | 4.0 | 3.4              | 10.7             |
| g. Only for youth hunters  | 61.4            | 9.0 | 3.7  | 16.0 | 3.0 | 1.3              | 5.6              |
| h. Only if deer hounds are not used  | 45.9            | 5.4 | 2.4  | 14.3 | 3.3 | 3.7              | 25.0             |
| i. Only if certain season lengths and bag limits are adjusted                                | 53.1            | 6.4 | 4.4  | 20.5 | 3.8 | 2.8              | 8.9              |
| j. Only if there are increased penalties for trespass  | 45.5            | 5.4 | 3.0  | 21.9 | 4.7 | 4.4              | 15.1             |
| k. With no limitations, just like any other hunting day                                      | 31.9            | 3.4 | 1.9  | 6.9  | 3.6 | 4.7              | 47.7             |
| <b>3. Do you support or oppose Sunday hunting in Virginia for each of these species?</b>     |                 |     |  |      |     |                  |                  |
|  | Strongly Oppose |     | Neither Oppose nor Support                               |      |     |                  | Strongly Support |
| a. Small Game (squirrel, rabbit, grouse, quail)  | 28.4            | 3.3 | 1.2  | 6.8  | 3.8 | 5.7              | 50.8             |
| b. Deer hunting (without dogs)   | 32.6            | 3.0 | 1.2  | 4.9  | 2.6 | 4.2              | 51.5             |
| c. Deer hunting with dogs  | 51.8            | 4.6 | 2.9  | 9.4  | 2.8 | 2.5              | 26.0             |
| d. Bear hunting (without dogs)   | 35.3            | 3.1 | 1.5  | 11.9 | 3.3 | 3.9              | 41.1             |
| e. Bear hunting with dogs  | 48.4            | 4.5 | 2.6  | 13.4 | 2.8 | 2.5              | 25.8             |
| f. Fall turkey   | 29.6            | 3.0 | 1.5  | 6.4  | 3.2 | 5.7              | 50.6             |
| g. Spring turkey   | 29.5            | 2.9 | 1.5  | 5.6  | 3.3 | 5.3              | 51.8             |
| h. Waterfowl   | 30.5            | 3.3 | 1.4  | 13.2 | 3.6 | 4.5              | 43.5             |
| i. Groundhog   | 26.9            | 2.6 | 1.3  | 10.9 | 3.0 | 4.7              | 50.6             |
| j. Coyote  | 25.9            | 2.1 | 1.1  | 8.4  | 2.6 | 4.7              | 55.2             |
| k. Raccoon   | 29.0            | 2.7 | 1.4  | 13.7 | 3.7 | 4.2              | 45.4             |
| l. Dove  | 30.7            | 3.0 | 1.5  | 11.1 | 3.0 | 4.6              | 46.0             |
| m. Fox   | 28.1            | 2.6 | 1.4  | 11.3 | 3.4 | 4.3              | 48.8             |
| <b>4. How far do you typically travel to hunt in Virginia? (check only one)</b>              |                 |     |  |      |     |                  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 25 miles <b>40.3%</b>                                     |                 |     | <input type="checkbox"/> 25-50 miles <b>34.7%</b>        |      |     |                  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 miles <b>17.3%</b>   |                 |     | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 100 miles <b>7.7%</b> |      |     |                  |                  |

**5. How many days did you hunt during the 2005-2006 hunting season (last year)?**

☐0-9 Days **17.3%**    ☐10-19 Days **30.5%**    ☐20-29 Days **22.4%**    ☐30 or more days **29.9%**

**6. In your opinion, if Sunday hunting is allowed it will reduce or increase...**

|   | Greatly<br>Reduce |     | Neither Reduce<br>nor Increase |      |      | Greatly<br>Increase |      |
|---|-------------------|-----|--------------------------------|------|------|---------------------|------|
| a. Amount of time to hunt   | 2.7               | 0.9 | 0.9                            | 18.0 | 9.8  | 16.0                | 51.7 |
| b. Conflicts between hunters and other outdoor users<br>(e.g., hikers, horseback riders, wildlife watchers) | 6.8               | 2.1 | 3.4                            | 48.7 | 10.5 | 8.5                 | 19.9 |
| c. Interest in hunting in Virginia  | 4.5               | 1.1 | 1.9                            | 30.1 | 11.6 | 13.9                | 36.8 |
| d. Access to private land   | 8.6               | 3.5 | 4.1                            | 55.4 | 8.9  | 5.0                 | 14.6 |
| e. Youth participation in hunting   | 4.3               | 1.0 | 2.0                            | 30.6 | 12.9 | 14.9                | 34.4 |
| f. Trespass problems  | 7.0               | 2.2 | 3.3                            | 54.3 | 10.8 | 7.3                 | 15.1 |
| g. Opportunities for hunters to try<br>new places to hunt in Virginia                                       | 3.7               | 0.8 | 1.3                            | 31.1 | 12.8 | 15.2                | 35.1 |
| h. Number of animals harvested  | 2.3               | 0.5 | 0.7                            | 20.1 | 26.6 | 23.1                | 26.6 |
| i. Bag limits   | 3.2               | 1.1 | 2.9                            | 46.9 | 17.3 | 12.0                | 16.7 |
| j. Season lengths   | 3.6               | 1.5 | 3.5                            | 43.3 | 14.4 | 11.5                | 22.2 |
| k. Conflicts between hunters and landowners   | 6.3               | 2.1 | 2.6                            | 53.1 | 10.2 | 8.0                 | 17.8 |

**7. Do you hunt primarily on?** ☐Public land **10.3%**    ☐Private land **65.2%**

☐Equal amount of time on both **24.5%**

**8. If hunting on Sunday were allowed, how likely would you be to take a friend or family member hunting on Sunday in Virginia?**

☐Not at all Likely **29.1%**    ☐Somewhat Likely **13.7%**    ☐Very Likely **51.9%**    ☐Don't Know **5.4%**

**9. Have you taken a youth hunting in VA since July 2005?** ☐Yes **59.7%**    ☐No **40.3%**

**10. If hunting on Sunday were allowed in Virginia, how likely would you be to take a youth hunting on Sunday in VA?**

☐Not at all Likely **31.9%**    ☐Somewhat Likely **15.8%**    ☐Very Likely **45.4%**    ☐Don't Know **7.0%**

**11. In which Virginia county (or independent city) do you currently reside?** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. In which type of area do you reside?**

☐Farm **22.7%**    ☐Rural, but not farm **43.2%**    ☐Town (less than 50,000 in population) **13.0%**  
☐Urban (city over 50,000 in population) **8.9%**    ☐Suburban (adjacent to city over 50,000) **12.2%**

**13. Are you?** ☐Male **96.8%**    ☐Female **3.2%**

**14. How old are you?** Mean=45.19 Years

This program received Federal financial assistance in Sport Fish and/or Wildlife Restoration. Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to the Office for Human Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 300, Arlington, VA 22203.

**Regional Responses to Question 1 (“Please indicate the level of support or opposition to Sunday hunting in Virginia”). The mean is based on the scale: 1= Strongly opposed; 4 = Neither oppose nor support; 7 = Strongly support.**

|           | Strongly Oppose |     | Neither Oppose nor Support |     |     | Strongly Support |      | Mean |
|-----------|-----------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----|------------------|------|------|
|           | Responses (%)   |     |                            |     |     |                  |      |      |
| Statewide | 28.5            | 3.5 | 2.3                        | 3.8 | 3.6 | 5.2              | 53.1 | 4.79 |
| Region 1  | 26.8            | 3.6 | 3.4                        | 3.9 | 4.3 | 4.5              | 53.4 | 4.82 |
| Region 2  | 31.3            | 4.4 | 2.6                        | 4.0 | 3.0 | 5.0              | 49.7 | 4.57 |
| Region 3  | 28.9            | 1.5 | 2.6                        | 2.6 | 3.6 | 3.9              | 57.0 | 4.90 |
| Region 4  | 30.7            | 3.5 | 1.2                        | 3.5 | 2.5 | 5.0              | 53.7 | 4.73 |
| Region 5  | 24.6            | 4.0 | 1.5                        | 4.4 | 3.9 | 7.4              | 54.3 | 4.98 |